

CHIEF DON HOLYFIELD

YEARS OF SERVICE | 1963-1986

Today we take a moment to look back and honor Chief Don P. Holyfield, the 13th Chief of Police for the Norman Police Department. Chief Holyfield is one of many innovators of the police department we look forward to sharing with you in the months to come.

CHIEF HOLYFIELD'S TENURE WITH NPD

Chief Holyfield began his career with the Norman Police Department in 1963, walking a beat. In 1964, he was assigned a scout car. He was promoted to Sergeant in January 1967, and was appointed Director of Personnel and Training. In this position, Chief Holyfield developed a recruitment and selection program for civilian and commissioned personnel. After attending Northwestern University Traffic Institute's training course, he organized and implemented the department's first Police Academy. He was promoted to Lieutenant in 1969, and attended the FBI National Academy in Washington D.C. Chief Holyfield received a degree in Criminal Justice Administration from Oklahoma City University. He was promoted to Captain in 1971 and to the rank of Major 1973 commanding the Administrative Services Bureau. In 1975, he was promoted to Chief of Police at the age of 33. Chief Holyfield served as Chief of Police until his retirement in 1986.

HOLYFIELD'S LONGSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS

Chief Holyfield's most noteworthy innovations for the police department were the completion of a new police facility in 1982, which is where the department is still located today. He also led the introduction of computerization into the department, development and implementation of Safety Town, new police training facilities, introduction of the Emergency Medical Service into the police department, construction of two new EMS facilities, and implementation of the Norman Police Academy.

CONTINUED SUCCESS FOLLOWING RETIREMENT

After retiring from the Norman Police Department, Chief Holyfield took his talents to the state level where he went on to become the Director of Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training (CLEET). As Director, he worked with the University of Oklahoma to validate the statewide law enforcement basic academy curriculum and increase the number of hours for police officer certification. Don was also one of the three founding fathers of the Oklahoma Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP), and in 1992 he started his own management consulting firm. His leadership was well-known as he went on to serve as Interim Chief of Police for Yukon, Oklahoma and Interim Sheriff for Cleveland County, Oklahoma.



**"CHIEF HOLYFIELD
PROFESSIONALIZED POLICING
IN OKLAHOMA."**

- Leon Sugg, Retired NPD Major



WORDS FROM THOSE WHO WORKED ALONGSIDE CHIEF HOLYFIELD

RETIRED NORMAN CHIEF OF POLICE | PHIL COTTEN

Retired Chief Phil Cotten, Norman Chief of Police from 1996 to 2011, first met Don in the early part of 1973. "At the time, I was working for OUPD and applying for a sergeant position there. He was a NPD Captain and on the interview panel. I was promoted. Anyway, about 2 months later, he inquired of my Lieutenant on how I was doing and how impressed he had been. So I applied to NPD and was selected for the Academy starting Sept 1, 1973. Don was appointed Chief in 1975. He was the impetus for the modernization of NPD. Such innovations as organizing a professional policy manual, a disciplinary system, and a modern promotional process. He was a major factor in the implementation of the Norman Police Academy. He believed very strongly that officers should be accountable for their actions, both on and off-duty. To say I learned a lot under his leadership would be a tremendous understatement."

Chief Cotten went on to share, what has been said as a true story, that on Don's first day to go to work he had to be there at 5:30 a.m. He wanted to eat breakfast, but didn't know where to go. He spotted Dinco's, which was on Main Street where Neighborhood Jam is now. Dinco's could be pretty wild around 3 a.m. Mrs. Flowers who owned it could just call the dispatcher (there was only one on-duty in those days and 9-1-1 didn't exist) and yell "fight" and dispatch knew where. While at breakfast on his first day, Don arrested a man who had a long history of being a public drunk. Since he didn't know where the jail was located, Don brought him to the PD on East Gray Street. When Don was hired he was given a badge and gun and little direction. He made it his mission, after his experience, to professionalize training of officers in Norman and statewide. Another great story is when one of the officers challenged Chief Holyfield to ride a motorcycle in the Norman parade. Don accepted the challenge and after riding in the parade, he said he was glad he didn't stall the motorcycle or embarrass his officers.

"HE WAS THE IMPETUS FOR THE MODERNIZATION OF NPD."

- Phil Cotten, Norman Chief of Police 1996-2011

RETIRED NPD LIEUTENANT | JIM SPEARMAN

Retired NPD Lieutenant Jim Spearman said "Chief Don Holyfield didn't smile very much while in the presence of his subordinates. There was, however, rare moments in which he confided in some of his upper echelon. After testing and interviews for new supervisors was complete and the final candidate list was announced, Chief Holyfield waited for seven to 10 days before announcing the new supervisor. During that time, he would ask his captains and lieutenants who the troops thought would be selected as the new supervisor. It certainly didn't have an influence on his decision but he seemed to delight in knowing how the troops would read the process. Following the announcement of the new supervisor he would frequently ask, with a rare smile, "Well, did I surprise them?"

RETIRED NPD MAJOR | LEON SUGG

Retired NPD Major Leon Sugg shares some of his thought and memories with us: “Chief Holyfield was the best Chief the Norman Police Department has ever known and we have had some good ones, and I feel we have a great Chief right now in Chief Kevin Foster. Chief Holyfield was always fair, he never took the side of a complaint until it was thoroughly investigated, but he would always stand up for his employees.”

“Chief Holyfield professionalized policing in Oklahoma. He implemented the Field Training Program for new officers, the educational incentive program which helped officers work toward obtaining a college degree, the Neighborhood Watch program, the Crime Stoppers Program in conjunction with the Norman Chamber of Commerce, and many other programs throughout the years. Chief Holyfield worked with Lahoma Nelson and Sooner Fashion Mall to open Safety Town, which has had thousands of young graduates over the years. He strived to have the best police department in the country and many other departments followed his lead.”

”Chief Holyfield would go out and ride on different shift with different officers just to stay in touch and see what the needs of the officers were. One Friday night he came out for the 11 p.m. briefing and this particular night, he rode with me. I was spotlighting businesses along W. Main Street. I drove through the parking lot of Al Salyar Oldsmobile Cadillac. We observed a couple of guys breaking into a car. Before I could get out of the unit, Chief Holyfield chased one guy west and I chased the other one east, we both caught the bad guys. Chief Don P. Holyfield was a great Christian man, and the best man I have ever known.”

KEY INNOVATIONS

- DEVELOPED & IMPLEMENTED SAFETY TOWN
- IMPLEMENTED FIELD TRAINING PROGRAM
- DEVELOPED EDUCATIONAL INCENTIVE PROGRAM
- STARTED NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM
- STARTED NORMAN CRIME STOPPERS PROGRAM
- STARTED NORMAN POLICE ACADEMY
- CONSTRUCTION OF NEW POLICE FACILITY & NEW TRAINING FACILITIES
- INTRODUCTION OF EMS TO NPD
- COMPUTERIZATION OF THE DEPARTMENT

